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SUBJECT: 9/11 ACTIVITIES IN ITALY

REF: STATE 161551

1. SUMMARY: The Embassy and Consulates General in Milan, Florence and Naples participated in thirteen September 11 commemoration events including the dedication of the World Trade Center Memorial in Padua, and a commemoration at the Parliament with Ambassador Spogli and President of the Chamber of Deputies Pier Ferdinando Casini. There were fewer events held than in past years, but the press covered those held closely, and mostly in a positive light. The press, the Mission and event organizers expanded the theme to cover the heroes and victims of all terrorist attacks and hurricane Katrina. Some leftist groups used the day to hold anti-war protests. END SUMMARY.

2. Four years after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 in the United States, Italians continue to mark the anniversary with memorial ceremonies. As expected, emotions are a bit more muted, but all the major print and electronic media featured a mix of September 11 recounting, correspondent dispatches from the U.S., and coverage of commemoration events in Italy. Most reports also used the occasion to remember other victims of terrorism, especially those in Madrid and London, and of Hurricane Katrina. The Embassy and Consulates received many invitations to 9/11 events, though fewer than in previous years.

3. Ambassador Spogli led the mission's participation in 9/11 ceremonies, participating in both an internal commemoration at the Embassy on Friday, September 9 and a public ceremony with President of the Chamber of Deputies Pier Ferdinando Casini in the Chamber building, Palazzo Montecitorio. The ceremony received broad media coverage that day. The Ambassador's lengthy personal recollection of New York City on the day of the attack anchored a two-hour special on Sky News 24. Both the Ambassador and Casini recalled all the victims of terrorism, those of Hurricane Katrina and the need to never forget 9/11. The President of Italy's Constitutional Court and several Chamber Deputies also attended the thirty-minute ceremony.

4. The dedication of the World Trade Center Memorial in Padua, designed by U.S. Architect and Cultural Ambassador Daniel Liebeskind, garnered coverage on all major national TV newscasts. Milan's Acting Consul General represented Mission Italy at the Memorial dedication and at the donation of U.S. Cultural Ambassador Joel Meyerowitz' September 11th photo exhibition, hosted by President of the Veneto Region and the Mayor of Padua. The themes included the U.S.-Italian friendship and alliance against terrorism; a remembrance and honoring of the victims; democracy building as the legacy of the 9/11 victims; and using architecture to "renew" an old part of Padua. Nearby demonstrations by left-wing extremists asserted the City of Padua should have built a memorial to commemorate all the victims of war and not just those from 9/11.

5. Embassy officers attended 9/11 commemoration events in Rome's neighboring cities of Civitavecchia, Latina and Nettuno. The city of Civitavecchia has planted two Cyprus trees in a park as symbols of the destroyed World Trade Center Towers and has held a commemoration ceremony in each of the past four years. The ceremony near Latina included officials from five local communities in addition to fire and law enforcement officers. Organized by a local community group, representatives told EmbOff it was very important for them to hold the event and to have an officer from the Embassy in attendance. They said the Latina area suffered heavy losses during World War II, and the older generations appreciate the enormous sacrifice made by the American people for the freedom of Italy. However, they said younger generations lack that understanding, and this ceremony is a way to renew the local communities' friendship with the United States. The ceremony in Nettuno was held just outside the U.S. cemetery where several thousand American soldiers are buried.

6. Milan officers attended several 9/11 events in Milan, Brescia, Venice and Riese Pio X. Milan's Provincial President hosted an event at the Palazzo Isimbardi with a discussion of terrorism since 9/11, which included the annual presentation of a journalism award in honor of Enzo Baldoni, an Italian journalist killed in Iraq in 2004. Also in Milan, EconOff attended a mass in honor of 9/11 victims at the church of Santa Maria delle Grazie al Naviglio.

Special references were made to 9/11 and victims of all terrorist attacks around the world. In Brescia, at an event held in a city park named for the Twin Towers, anti-globalists and green groups disrupted a speech by Conoff and unfurled a banner stating "Yankee Go Home." In Riese Pio X, Conoff spoke at the dedication of a new town square called "Piazza 11 Settembre 2001." The piazza features a small statue of the twin towers cut from white marble with a

series of national flags. The symbolism behind the memorial is that the nations whose flags fly from the poles stand as a bulwark against terrorism. At a ceremony in Venice, national and local officials discussed Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans' response and Venice disaster response plans. The group informally indicated it would welcome any U.S. official visitors and delegations interested in studying Venice's disaster plans as Venice deals extensively with flood waters, canals and levees.

17. The Consulates General in Florence and Naples also participated in several events. Palermo fire officials held a wreath laying ceremony in honor of the victims of 9/11 and officials in the city of Ercolano unveiled a sculpture in their honor. Though no U.S. official was in attendance, the famous American poet Amiri Baraka gave a reading of his now-infamous screed "Somebody Blew Up America - A Poem about September 11" at the prestigious Napolipoesia Festival in the outdoor amphitheater of the Parco Camaldoli in Naples. The Consulate General will be working with its Spanish counterparts on an event to be held September 21 in honor of Wells Remy Crowther, an American of Italian descent whose story inspired a Spanish painter to create artwork recalling the young man's heroism.

18. The Consulate in Florence received five invitations to public commemorations of 9/11 throughout the consular district (Florence, Bologna, Grosseto, Castiglion Fiorentino and Castelnuovo Val di Cecina.) Two of the five had strong political connotations. An event organized by leftist organizations in Florence focused on an anti-war message and included only leftist oriented participants critical of the U.S. and Italian governments. The Tuscan edition of conservative, pro-government daily Il Giornale carried a special section on 9/11 with photographs and interviews with prominent local politicians and Florence University political scientists. The 4-page section opened with a full-page interview and pictures with the CG.

19. This cable was coordinated with Consulates General Florence, Naples and Milan.

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